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ABSTRACT

As a preamble to the development of a storytelling aesthetic, a study analyzed written reports of recent storytelling events to investigate the claim that little theoretical and critical language regarding storytelling is currently in use. Ninety-six reviews of storytelling performances by 11 different storytellers were examined. Sixty were classified as feature articles, 36 as reviews, and none as criticism. Ten basic categories of comments emerged: (1) negative comments; (2) generic positive comments about performers or performances; (3) general positive comments involving the storyteller's effect on an audience; (4) general positive comments involving the persona of the teller; (5) general positive comments involving comparison; (6) general positive comments involving story content or construction; (7) general positive comments regarding story delivery; (8) specific positive comments regarding story content or construction; (9) specific positive comments regarding story delivery; and (10) specific positive comments involving a performer's style. Analysis showed that only 60 of a total of 237 judgmental comments were valuable for revealing terminology useful for establishing a critical storytelling lexicon. From those comments 40 terms emerged, 20 of which were purely nominal in nature and 32 of which were borrowed from other arts. Thus, the study found that the majority of the comments, though relevant to the art of storytelling, were too vague and imprecise to be of value in serving as a basis for developing a critical language for the art. Moreover, it was clear that reviewers of storytelling performances had little conscious conception of the uniqueness of the art. Nonetheless, some judgmental comments did reveal concepts, more frequently implicitly than explicitly, which might serve as a starting point for developing a storytelling aesthetic. (Contains 3 tables of data and 10 figures.) (SR)

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ED 409 562

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF REVIEWS OF RECENT STORYTELLING PERFORMANCES

by

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INTRODUCTION

A natural and necessary preamble to the development of a storytelling aesthetic must be an analysis of written reports of recent storytelling events - a current status check, as it were, regarding the state of the art of what can loosely be regarded as reviews of storytelling performances. Natural, since the renaissance of public performance storytelling began more than twenty years ago and the time seems ripe for the development of a storytelling lexicon; necessary in order to determine the validity of claims that little theoretical and critical language regarding storytelling is currently in use.

The purpose of this report, then, is to present the findings of an analysis of reviews of recent performance storytelling events. Accessing these reviews was done entirely by solicitation since there are no professional references which specifically or conveniently index storytelling performance reviews. The researcher contacted a

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total of 11 storytellers (4 male, 8 female two of whom perform in tandem and who shall, for the purpose of data analysis, be treated as one teller) who have developed a national reputation as performance tellers and who have performed in major venues throughout the United States and abroad where critical reviews of their performances would likely have been written. Several of these performers have also developed performance pieces (entire performances focused on a single story, or a unifying topic, character, setting, or dramatic structure) for multiple performances, often performed in a single venue, the more likely to be critically reviewed than single performances. The solicitation was done by phone conversation during which six of the performers informally discussed their opinions regarding the nature and status of reviews of storytelling performances.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The performers provided the researcher with a total of 96 documents all of which were analyzed using the following research questions:

1. Were the submitted documents true reviews or some other type of article?
2. Is reviewing and/or criticism of storytelling performances a common practice?
3. What is the nature of the judgments that are made about storytelling performances?
4. What aspects of the storytelling process are typically addressed in the reviews?
5. Are the judgments typically positive, negative, or balanced?
6. What language/terminology is used in critiquing a performance? Is the language incisive or vague?
7. Are the judgments valid/relevant for storytelling?

8. Do the critical judgments suggest that reviewers understand the unique nature of storytelling?
9. What issues are raised regarding the art of storytelling based on these reviews and an analysis of their content?

DATA ANALYSIS

Notes Regarding the Presentation of the Data

In order to retain anonymity for the tellers involved in this study, the following decisions were made regarding reference to them throughout the text. All tellers will be referred to as "teller", "storyteller," "performer," or "artist" in the text. The letter "T" will be substituted for the teller's name and all pronouns used in reference to the tellers in the quotations found in the text or the figures. The two tandem tellers who are subjects in this study will be referred to in the singular and quotations regarding them will be altered accordingly except in those instances where reference to their duality is unavoidable. In addition, no list of references will be provided for the articles cited in the study since, in most instances, personal identifying terminology is used in the headlines of these articles.

For the purpose of analyzing the data via tallying and facilitating reference to specific quotations during the analysis and interpretation of the data, the quotations have been numbered in sequence within each of the ten figures.

The term "judgmental comment" is defined specifically as a word or collection of words which relate to a *single* evaluative

notion. Judgmental comments appear in the form of a single word or paired words, phrases, complete sentences, or various parts of multiple sentences that are contiguous in a single paragraph in the original feature article or review from which the words are quoted. For example, "...triumphant performance...." (Figure 2, #5) is a paired word comment, "...a genius among the storytellers...." (Figure 2, #4) is a phrase comment, "To say T has a way with words would be a ludicrous understatement." (Figure 2, #25) is a full sentence comment, and "...shows you the world. ...T introduces you to some of the world's most colorful characters...." (Figure 10, #12) is an example of a comment consisting of parts of multiple sentences contiguous to one another that are abstracted from a s ngle paragraph. In some instances, the researcher determined that parts of some single sentences related to different elements in the storytelling process. In those instances, the sentence was fragmented into multiple judgmental comments. Take, for example, the following quotation: "T's stiff, slightly awkward delivery belies an affable personality and a flair for the ridiculous." The first part of the sentence, T's stiff, slightly awkward delivery" (Figure 1, #1), refers specifically (and somewhat negatively) to the artist's movement while delivering a story. The second part, "an affable personality" (Figure 4, #3), is a general, positive reference to the teller's persona, while the third part, "a flair for the ridiculous" (Figure 9, #12), refers in a positive way to the teller's style in story interpretation. As such, it was determined that this single sentence contained three distinct judgmental comments each of which was assigned to its appropriate category.

The Nature of Articles Submitted

In order to determine the nature of each document, it is necessary to develop a set of operating definitions. Up to this point the term "review" has been used in a very broad sense to describe

any document the content of which involves, even by implication, a storytelling performance. For the purpose of this analysis it is important to distinguish between a *feature article*, a *review*, and a *criticism*. *Features* are purely descriptive accounts, or nearly so. They focus frequently on the characterization of an event (a storytelling performance or festival, for example), or a performer (who may have just completed or is about to complete a performance). However, the focus might also be on a performance piece, or a concept (the recent renaissance of performance storytelling, for example) related in some way to a past or impending storytelling performance. Typically, features employ some combination of more than one of these elements. In many instances feature writers will interview the teller and include in the article quotes from the interview.

Reviews, however, are both descriptive and evaluative, remain strictly focused on a past performance, typically involve only one such event, tend to be brief, and are crafted relatively soon after the performance is completed. They often serve as a guide for potential audiences of future performances by the artist.

By contrast, *criticism* would involve an in-depth and lengthy analysis and evaluation of either a single performance or multiple performances. In addition, it might be constructed long after the completion of the targeted performance or performances.

Of the 96 documents submitted for review 60 could be classified as feature articles, 36 as reviews and none as criticism. Moreover, conversations with tellers indicated that, in their perception, the great majority of articles written about storytelling would fall into the feature category. While the overt data tends to support their belief (there were almost twice as many feature articles submitted as compared to reviews), it must also be remembered that the researcher's request was for reviews only. It is likely that some tellers that were contacted, realizing that few if

any legitimate reviews had been written about their performances, culled from their collection of articles any which included some judgmental comments. Thus, the majority of articles sent were feature in nature; descriptive primarily and including only 31 judgmental comments as opposed to 206 such comments in the reviews. Moreover, when the data are analyzed by teller an interesting pattern emerges. Table 1 indicates that only three of the tellers submitted more reviews than features. Teller 1 submitted

Table 1

Documents Categorized by Teller and Type

	Type	
Teller	Feature	Review
1	0	1
2	1	1
3	3	2
4	10	0
5	4	9
6	5	0
7	7	1
8	5	4
9	20	1
10	1	16
11	4	1
Total	60	36

only one document, a review, and indicated that, of the many articles written about T, only this one could be considered a review. In addition, two of the tellers accounted for over 70% of the reviews submitted (Tellers 5 and 10). Given these realizations, it is fair to say that, if this sample of tellers is typical of all performance tellers,

far more feature articles are written about them than reviews while no in-depth criticism is being written about their performances.

The Nature of the Judgments about Storytelling Performances

There were a total of 237 judgmental comments made in the 96 documents submitted for analysis. When the researcher began to categorize the comments based on similarity of content relative to a specific element of the storytelling process, ten basic categories emerged. Of the total number of comments made, only 7 were of a non-positive nature so it seemed natural and significant to this research that these comments serve as one category. These comments are presented in Figure 1 (Negative Comments).

Figure 1

Negative Comments

---

1. "...stiff, slightly awkward delivery...."
2. "T gives the impression T's not quite comfortable up on stage...."
3. "...there is the nagging sense that T has homogenized the fable with Disneyesque efficiency."
4. "T is somewhat shy.... T's voice is gentle even hesitant...."
5. "...lapses in logic.... "(refers to two elements in the content of the performance piece which the reviewer cites as illogical)
6. "The stable (a prop) ...is little-used in the stories.... One wonders what the storytellers could have done with that space; part of the storyteller's art...is to urge the audience to imagine the settings for itself."
7. "Though ancient in origin and told in traditional style, the story is given a contemporary feel by T, who injects a few very modern

pieces of slang into the narrative. I found the effect to be more jarring than effective."

Of the remaining 230 positive comments, 49 related in a very generic way to a performer or performance; such comments as: "...a genius among the storytellers..." (#4), "...triumphant performance." (#5), and "I hope that T does this again, and soon, so that others can enjoy it - theater, as history, as progress- much as I did." (#6). These comments are presented in Figure 2 (Generic Positive Comments About Performers or Performances).

Figure 2

Generic Positive Comments About Performers or Performances

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1. "...with the skill of an experienced actor...he can bring the war alive."
2. "T soared so high above The Lesson for the Day...."
3. "...two fine strong performers."
4. "...a genius among the storytellers..."
5. "...triumphant performance."
6. "I hope that T does this again, and soon, so that others can enjoy it- theater, as history, as progress- much as I did."
7. "T is undoubtedly one of the most persuasive actresses this observer has ever seen."
8. "... a stellar featured performer..."
9. "...T is the best company imaginable, not to be missed."
10. "... one of the most listened-to people you will find."
11. "... the sort of thing T is doing so engagingly in T's one-man show."

12. "Being with T is like being part of an extremely entertaining after-supper, in-to-the-wee-hours conversation."
13. "...T's very funny."
14. "T...is also still a child." (an endearing comment in context)
15. "...an awesome demonstration of the storytellers art..."
16. "...a spellbinding one." (referring to the teller)
17. "Yet as T is baring T's soul a showman's instincts are at work, aware of the need to keep matter's entertaining."
18. "...extraordinary occurrences." (the stories T tells)
19. "...is a must hear."
20. "T has something important to say and T has developed a fascinating medium for T's messag[illegible]."
21. "Enchanting"
22. "The 50 minute show has an honesty and integrity not always found in regional material, which sometimes tends to be corn pone and pandering."
23. "T has written an unpretentious yet eloquent one-man show..."
24. "... premiere performance."
25. "To say that T has a way with words would be a ludicrous understatement."
26. "master storyteller."
27. "...a remarkable example of shared experience."
28. "T's...spinning yarns can create an evening filled with theatrical magic."
29. "...produces a show as large and as full as the wide realm of imagination."
30. "...is even more affecting and vivid than last season's." (Referring to a performance)
31. "This is a family show that could serve as a good low-priced introduction to the theater for youngsters."
32. "...straight forward storyteller."
33. "Listening to T... can be a wonderful corrective for being caught up in the complexities both of modern life and modern theater."

34. "It is a privilege to have an artist of T's skill and humanity among us and a treat not to be missed."
35. "Superb middle section." (referring to that part of the performance)
36. "... cause to rejoice..."
37. "T shines as a bard of the modern day."
38. "A genius among storytellers."
39. "T's storytelling brilliance goes far beyond superlatives exclusive to world class talents."
40. "...is gifted- a spellbinder who ignites the powers of recall which mingle T's youthful perceptions with your own."
41. "T possesses the delightful gift of speech."
42. "...T weaves around us a wondrous tapestry of people and predicaments.
43. "T elevates storytelling to an act, with equal parts technique and talent."
44. "...astounding performance..."
45. "T is a spell-weaver, who liberates the audiences' own imaginations, and through his colorful words and images, inspires us to create with T."
46. "T makes memory jam: childhood and adolescence preserved in a form more colorful, sweeter- and easier to share around- than the original might have been."
47. "Storyteller extraordinaire."
48. "...is a wonderful storyteller who combines ancient Japanese theatrical forms with a modern feminist sensibility to weave a magical 90 minutes..."
49. "...a true professional..."

Twenty-six comments dealt with the effect a teller or performance had on the audience. Typical of these comments are the following: "...I became totally absorbed in the first story..." (#2), and "enchanted the audience..." (#3) These comments are located in

Figure 3 (General Positive Comments Involving the Storyteller's Effect on an Audience).

Figure 3

General Positive Comments Involving the Storyteller's Effect on an Audience

---

1. "By the time T finished spinning out the ancient tale, T's 'modern' audience was totally silent. Many had discreetly drawn closer, and, at the end, I was not the only listener dabbing at my eyes."
2. "...I became totally absorbed in the first story..."
3. "...enchanted the audience..."
4. "...T's young audience got lost in the fun."
5. "...kept students mesmerized at one moment and laughing uproariously at the next."
6. "...able to move audiences to tears and then laughter in a matter of minutes."
7. "...Several hundred youngsters sat entranced on the auditorium floor..."
8. "...the children learned and lived and loved every minute of it."
9. "T...kept us enthralled. T did more than tell a story - T shared it, and T's knowledge drew us in, kept us on the edge of our seats."
10. "T's...mesmerizing one-man show."
11. "...spellbinding skill...."
12. "T yanked me in..."
13. "...rivets T's audience."
14. "The audience was mesmerized and enchanted."
15. "T holds T's audience, adult and child alike, in rapt attention for an hour of delightful storytelling."

16. "By the end you are uplifted, moved, and inspired with the knowledge that we are all part of a great human family, a community and communion of people...."
17. "T brings an audience as close to the tribal experience of communal values expressed through shared stories as may be possible in these cynical times."
18. "...T enraptures those who want to see a different side of life, those who are in for adventure and have a mind to seek it out."
19. "...this storyteller transports all listeners in the palm of T's hand.
20. "...the crowd broke into applause. Even before the finish of the piece, those in the audience voiced their considerable approval."
21. "Listening to T takes you back to your childhood, when you were fascinated by the stories told by an aunt or grandparent."
22. "T's show is absorbing and mesmerizing."
23. "The result is a memorable, mesmerizing, thoroughly satisfying evening of theater."
24. "To watch T weave T's tales is to become an honorary member of that village, and an active collaborator in the creative process."
25. "T's one of those rare performers who can engage you consistently throughout a whole evening of theater.
26. "...audience laughed loudly, and their pleasure was clearly stated by the ovation given to T."

Twenty comments, found in Figure 4 (General Positive Comments Involving the Persona of the Teller), referred to a teller's physical features, personality, presumed intelligence, aura or charisma. For example: "...has huge blue eyes and a gentle wonderful smile." (#10), "...an affable personality." (#3), and "... couple T's powers of observation with T's overactive imagination, and you have extraordinary occurrences." (#8).

Figure 4

General Positive Comments Involving the Persona of the Teller

1. "...a pretty young woman stood...telling a story.... At first, they (audience) were drawn by the beauty of the storyteller..."
2. "...extraordinarily expressive face, striking black eyes and waist-length black hair."
3. "...an affable personality."
4. "T is a rumpled presence about as non-'theatrical' as you can get." (stated in an endearing context)
5. "You start out laughing at a friendly jokester and end in appreciation of a mystical poet."
6. "...a ...journey through...T's fertile brain."
7. "...couple T's powers of observation with T's overactive imagination, and you have extraordinary occurrences."
8. "...the story was enthralling."
9. "...has huge blue eyes and a gentle wonderful smile."
10. "T has a magic which flows out from T's songs and spells to touch T's audience in their hearts."
11. " ... incredible rapport established..."
12. "...unique in the warmth and human feeling which T conveys so naturally; T's boundless energy infuses T's work and songs in every breath."
13. "...gives life to...tales."
14. "...skilled at seeing truth and emotion..."
15. "...bright smile and good humor."
16. "...you are entertained by T's skill, T's humor and T's wide-ranging interest."
17. "...has a fascination with old fashioned things and ways...because T understands that they are our history."
18. "T...is a repertory troupe as large as the range of T's own imagination."

19. "Tall, lanky, with a wide reach and expressive hands, T's good Irish face and wise blue eyes tell a story even before T begins to speak."
20. "There's an aura of mischief, humor, kindness and generosity of soul about T that is so immediately captivating...."

Eight of the comments drew comparisons between the teller, or a specific story or performance piece and some other entity; for example: "One of T's most gripping programs.... It's as harrowing and moving as any recent play or movie on the subject." (#3), and "The South's answer to Marshall Dodge...." (#4). These comments are presented in Figure 5 (General Positive Comments Involving Comparison).

Figure 5

General Positive Comments Involving Comparison

---

1. "Listening to T talk is like watching Itzsak Perlman fiddle. The virtuosity is astounding...."
2. "Like fine radio drama, T draws on the audience's imagination to build an image more vivid than other theatrical formats might have yielded."
3. "One of T's most gripping programs.... It's as harrowing and moving as any recent play or movie on the subject."
4. "The South's answer to Marshall Dodge...."
5 "To say that T...tells stories is on the same level of understatement as saying the Flying Karamazov Brothers juggle a little."
6. "...only slightly less maniac than Robin Williams...."
7. "...is as good as Spalding Gray in 'Swimming to Cambodia,' or Robert Morris, Broadway's award winning actor, in the one-man show

'Tru.' In fact, in many respects, T's performance is more satisfying than either of those pieces."

8. "T's stories are scratching in the vein of 'Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,' the book of language and pictures by James Agee and Walker Evans that put the life of depression era men and women on record."

A total of 33 comments involved the content of a story or its construction. Eight of these comments were general in nature; comments such as: "...richly textured stories." (#5), and "T writes the stories T tells, and their construction and delivery are unbeatable." (#6). These comments can be found in Figure 6 (General Positive Comments Involving Story Content or Construction).

Figure 6

General Positive Comments Involving Story Content or Construction

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1. "...has enabled him to put together a compelling, gut-wrenching collage...."
2. "Beneath his seeming rambling, T has a literary consciousness."
3. "...richly crafted detail."
4. "T's stories were all of the expressive, vital and charmed quality of the first."
5. "...richly textured stories."
6. "T writes the stories T tells, and their construction and delivery are unbeatable."
7. "T tales are exciting, engaging, and filled with humanity as well as plot."
8. "As the millennium approaches, one wonders who is going to invent the next century. T's stories might be a good place to start."

Twenty-five of these comments, found in Figure 7 (Specific Positive Comments Involving Story Content or Construction), were specific in nature. Included in this group are comments such as: "...he creates not only a stunning array of characters, but an entire town." (#17), "(the performance piece) has an emotional center that T pierces like a bull'seye, without ever becoming sentimental or maudlin." (#18).

Figure 7

Specific Positive Comments Involving Story Content or Construction

---

1. "...with the sensitivity of one touched forever by The Wall, with care for those who fought in T's place..., T can bring the war alive."
2. "Hearing T...talk about people makes them familiar. It doesn't lessen the heroes, or their work, but it keeps them close to life-size, makes them accessible, adds a reality that comes when someone speaks, creates a feeling of 'I can do that....' "
3. "T handles the intricate tales effectively...."
4. "...that what is clearly tightly written and premeditated seems to flow naturally and spontaneously."
5. "Like a good storyteller, T weaves these stories into a cohesive whole."
6. "For the thrills and excitement, giggles, and scares of an oral roller coaster...." (refers to the variety of moods evoked in the stories and the juxtaposition of widely varied moods throughout the performance)
7. "...stories are joyful and many are hilariously funny."
8. "...this professional storyteller has T's way with words, stringing them together so they ring with beauty and create a picture so real that it can almost be traced with the fingers."
9. "...gives life to a marvelous variety of ancient tales."

10. "...the individual stories...are carefully woven together in a tapestry that illustrates the deep, sometimes dark and often joyous emotions of a region and its people."
11. "...the tiny details T gives the fictional counterparts are heart-breakingly real and affecting."
12. "...shows you the world. ...T introduces you to some of the world's most colorful characters...."
13. "...experience the richness that T brings to the event." (with specific reference to the variety of stories in T's program)
14. "...tale is filled like an English muffin with little nooks and crannies of detail, memorable characters..., a moral lesson or two and a happy ending."
15. "...sweet innocence about T's stories that is ideal for all ages."
16. (T's gestures) "...enriching the spoken syllables with layer upon layer of mood and meaning."
17. "...with T's voice. T's memory, T's imagination, T's wit and T's wisdom T peoples that stage with whole towns of heroes, villains, fools, braggarts, poets, and just plain folks."
18. "...he creates not only a stunning array of characters, but an entire town."
19. "(the performance piece) has an emotional center that T pierces like a bull'seye, without ever becoming sentimental or maudlin."
20. "...story transcends the common grounds of gender and geography." (referring to the fact that the story provides the audience with an original perspective on the world)
21. "...hard to imagine anyone coming closer to the heart of storytelling as a form of human chronicles."
22. "...T has moved, in only a few years, from the heart-wrenching simplicity of (one specific story), with its relatively flat character/plot structures, to tales like (another specific and more recently crafted story), which grapple with characters on a far more complex level."
23. "(T's characters) are a most charming, eccentric and- it's unavoidable- heartwarming lot...."

24. "The...stories are at their most touching when T's narrative moves from the particular to the metamorphic...."
25. "...stories that are of broad enough interest to entertain young and old alike."

In the first attempt at categorization, there were a large number of comments that all appeared to deal with the way in which a story was presented. As the analysis continued, it became evident that there would be a need for a distinction between a teller's own personal style of delivery, the aura which makes an artist's telling unique, and elements of delivery which, irrespective of an artist's own personal style, distinguish a good performance from a poor one. Style involves such notions as the choice of words, the amount of gesturing, or the use of props or instruments by a performer. It relates to the manner of a teller's delivery (energetic, laid-back, straight-from-the-face, fast paced, witty, sarcastic, etc.) and the nature of the rapport between teller and audience (assertive, distant, didactic, supportive, etc.). Judgments involving style tend to be subjective and dependant, to a great extent, on the personal tastes of the observer.

Delivery, on the other hand, involves the *appropriateness* of the use of words and pauses, gestures and props, instrumentation and the like relative to the basic personality of the teller, the nature of the story, the setting in which the story is performed, and the size and constituency of the audience. It also involves judgments about timing, whether the mood of the teller matches the mood of the story, whether transitions between stories are smooth or not, whether or not the teller disappears in favor of the story, and whether or not the teller condescends to the audience, which is particularly important in telling to audiences of children. Judgements about these elements can be made irrespective of a teller's style and, therefore are of a more objective nature than stylistic judgments.

Given this distinction, then, judgmental comments relating to the way a teller presents stories are categorized either as delivery comments or style comments. Reviewing the comments regarding delivery, it was possible to distinguish between general and specific, whereas the style comments were all determined to be specific in nature. General delivery comments, a total of 9, can be found in Figure 8 (General Positive Comments Involving Story Delivery) and include such statements as: "...delivery entrancing..." (#1), and "The pace and vocal nuances...are exquisite." (#2).

Figure 8

General Positive Comments Involving Story Delivery

1. "...delivery entrancing..."
2. "The pace and vocal nuances...are exquisite."
3. "flawless rhythm and timing..."
4. "...in one exquisitely touching moment (T) transforms the girl into a woman."
5. "As...T warms to the material, both T's voice and movement take on greater flexibility and expressiveness."
6. "...characterized with facial expressions and vocal inflections so adept I could swear that T is a shapeshifter."
7. "...captivating delivery..."
8. "T writes the stories T tells and their construction and delivery are unbeatable."
9. "...images stay with you..."
10. "T gets the details right. A woman sitting behind me murmured with recognition as T evoked his mother kneading dye into the wartime margarine."

Specific delivery comments, a total of 23, are located in Figure 9 (Specific Positive Comments Involving Story Delivery). This figure presents such comments as: "...a story T relates with sufficient irreverence...." (#5), and "T's gestures and expressions are explicit but never over-done, always well suited to illustrating T's narrative." (#7).

Figure 9

Specific Positive Comments Involving Story Delivery

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1. "They echo each other, play off the other's words and have developed a sense of timing that would make Rodney Dangerfield respectful."
2. "...T integrated these elements (taped recordings of voices, songs) into the production to add just the right emphasis."
3. "T does all the talking, of course, but T's pauses, ...and sensitivity to the audience's reactions give...the feeling of give-and-take."
4. "There are only a few performers who can hold an audiences' attention for a couple of hours with talk, and T is definitely among them."
5. "...a story T relates with sufficient irreverence...."
6. "...skill at painting such indelible portraits."
7. "T"s gestures and expressions are explicit but never over-done, always well suited to illustrating T's narrative."
8. "...they complement each other's natural style and are nearly frightening in their 'oneness' when telling a story together...."
9. "T skillfully choreographs music, sound and...excellent lights to enhance moods, smooth transitions, and create a seamless flow of movement and interest."
10. "...T's managing, as if by magic, to create a universe you can see, feel, smell and almost taste."
11. "...each (story) specifically characterized by precise voice and gesture...."

12. "With seamless transformation T moves from 'master spy' hero to (another character)."
13. "The vivid images come alive (in the minds of the audience) with original scripts and T's zeal for T's creations."
14. "In addition to using his hands, T brilliantly used T's body to create the image of a scene without the assistance of props."
15. "...amazingly captures the wistful, lonely, heightened reality of a teenage boy."
16. "The potential for caricature and condescension is there, but somehow T manages to inhabit the minds of his people (his characters not the audience) so completely that they emerge with dignity no matter how wacky they are...."
17. "T also can evoke different times and places with indelible vividness, although the tone of the stories often moves out of realism and into fantasy."
18. "...T's also a sensitive composer for how long a piece should run, where pauses and stresses should go, how to develop an image as though it were a musical theme."
19. "T doesn't need sets or costumes to hold an audience, just T's own gift of transformation; T seems to disappear into his characters be they men, women, or children."
20. "There's nothing condescending or cutesy about how T presents T's characters: each has his or her own dignity."
21. "T weaves this tale like a tapestry, moving easily from arrogant samurai to loving wife and then to the waspish, aging shrew that the samurai's new wife becomes."
22. "...expressive voice that moves easily among different characters: gentle twisting hands that create the appropriate images to underline the narrative, and a facile face that bends, bulges, and softens to capture the character of the moment."
23. "T captivated the audience with the variety of ways T utilized T's voice. T used a distinct voice for each of T's characters alternating pace and tone to convey different moods."

Finally, 62 comments regarding style (the largest category) are located in Figure 10 (Specific Positive Comments Involving a Performer's Style). This figure includes comments such as: "Alternately funny and poetic, at times nearly mystical...." (#15), "...the observant details are a source of endless fascination." (#22), and "Rich with animation and energy, T moved dramatically...." (#47)

Figure 10

Specific Positive Comments Involving a Performer's Style

1. "...kinetic performances...."
2. "...T delights audiences with T's animated and energetic style."
3. "...animated performance...."
4. "...rich voice...."
5. "...dramatic presence..."
6. "...the instincts and the color are what make the flesh tingle."
7. "...create an energetic magic between them...."
8. "...use facial expressions, action and vocal inflections to enrich the words...."
9. "...a man of such poetry, wit, and elegance that, even in a rugby shirt, he seems Elizabethan."
10. "...illustrates it with a wry, whimsical doo-wop parody."
11. "dead pan wit."
12. "...a flair for the ridiculous."
13. "While T clearly delineates his view point, he never preaches."
14. "Thus, his male, Catholic perspective grows familiar without becoming obtrusive."
15. "Alternately funny and poetic, at times nearly mystical...."
16. "...T's low-key...one-man show...."
17. "T tantalizes. T teases. T lifts the audience onto the sage (sic) and sends them laughingly back to their seats. T playfully gets into their minds and helps them expand their imaginations."

18. "T bills himself as a storyteller, but T's looser and more conversational than the word implies."
19. "...T's not in-your-face but willing to give you a chance to make up your mind about T. T sidles up to you like a cat, revealing T's self gradually."
20. "T does so (holds an audience's attention) with such a low-key, understated, dead-pan delivery that what is clearly tightly written and premeditated seems to flow naturally and spontaneously."
21. "...a seemingly effortless journey through time, space and T's fertile brain."
22. "...the observant details are a source of endless fascination."
23. "...T's as comfortable as an old sweater. T is companionable rather than assertive, a rumpled reflective man.... Sweet-natured, funny, and sometimes moving, T is definitely worth spending a couple of hours with."
24. "T is a commanding, low-key modern practitioner of the oral folk tale tradition."
25. "T brings to much of T's program a detached irony which would be difficult to muster for the...stories."
26. "...his animated leaps from character to character are crisply exicuted,..."
27. "with...an ease that suggests improvisation, T guides the audience through...."
28. "A...show which T performs with an exuberant yet homespun style."
29. "T's eloquence with face, voice, and hands told the story with unbearable power and T's fingers held a single paper crane lightly as T spoke."
30. "...rich, vibrant, voice shapes stories...."
31. "...has an incredible, emotive voice - mesmerizing when its low and breathy, compelling when its clear and strong."
32. "All of T's work...is charged with the beauty of T's songs and lyrics."

33. "...uses T's hands to suggest the action in a bold, polished and stylised way...."
34. "...exuberance in telling them (stories)."
35. "...imbues a considerable amount of drama and tension in T's story."
36. "What one remembers...is T's restraint, T's piercing stare and the finality of T's line readings, all used to great effect."
37. "Each substory (of a program of substories) is precise, alive and remarkable spare...."
38. "When T spins T's magic webs of words, T issues them forth from T's entire being - T's eyes, T's face, T's hands, indeed T's entire body enriching the spoken syllables with layer upon layer of mood and meaning."
39. "...he virtually becomes the story and all its people, places, and events. ...fills the bare stage with a seeming cast of thousands. With the slightest verbal nuance or shift in stance or gesture, T slips from character to character, making each one come alive. ...seems...to be reliving the tales of the past to give them new life in the present. T's is the most perfect fusion of narrative and drama that I've ever witnessed."
40. "What makes T so enjoyable is T's infectious directness, his straight-in-the-eye good spirits, T's impish delight in impersonating more characters than you can shake a stick at."
41. "T has the talent for words that enables him to turn his observations into striking new phrases."
42. "T relates the actions and thoughts of characters reverberating with emotion. It's hard not to touch home with his pictures."
43. "The purity of T's storytelling emerges not only from T's characters, but also from T's technique which is very simple..."
44. "T dramatizes these cataclysms like someone conducting a symphony."
45. "In performance, T's mastery at the art and craft of storytelling compels the audience to listen with ears they may not have used in awhile."

46. "Each story was accentuated by T's overflowing enthusiasm and excitement."
47. "Rich with animation and energy, T moved dramatically...."
48. "T brought passion and excitement to the piece."
49. "Everything that T says and does adds to the tale. There's as much drama and as much characterization as you'd expect to find in a fully mounted play. The speech patterns of one character differ from those of another, as do their walks, facial expressions, and hand gestures."
50. "...through T's colorful words and images, T inspires us to create...."
51. "...gives you these portraits at the same time it carries over some of the charm and simplicity of earlier storytelling."
52. "T's lightening characterizations sketch these figures in vivid colors. Ladies, children, hobos, mosquitoes, even sprouting weeds have a life of their own. And it's a life T gives them in a plenitude of emotions. T's listened to people and T's watched them, and T gives you tender, searching portraits of their inner lives."
53. "...startling knack for transforming T's self into characters, male or female."
54. "...T's not afraid of a little hyperbole, either. I especially liked throw away lines like 'even the wall-paper was glad to see us at Aunt Ann's' and the way a pal's freckles 'exploded off his face.' "
55. "In T's phenomenal technique, T takes theatrical gesture into the realms of mime, dance and song."
56. "...poetic images stay with you...."
57. "A virtuoso...by modulating T's velvety voice, T can turn a word into a thousand pictures."
58. "T is at T's best in this story: lashing T's tresses across the imaginary bell with vigor and venom."
59. "...lack of assertiveness...." (stated in an endearing context)
60. "...vivid talent fills a virtually empty stage...with color and flavor of memory."

61. "T has a rich voice...."

Analysis of the Non-positive Judgmental Comments

Of the seven non-positive comments, three of them, the first, second, and fourth (see Figure 1, Negative Comments), appear to have been made in an endearing context and, therefore, cannot be viewed completely as negative criticisms. None of the seven comments were located in feature articles as would be expected. What is unexpected is that only 2% (4 of 206) of the comments found in reviews are truly negative in tone. Can performance storytellers be doing that good of a job or is it the case that the reviewers, most of whom typically review plays, staged concerts and the like, simply don't know how to deal critically with storytelling?

Beyond the three comments just discussed which are somewhat vague in nature (the term *delivery* does appear in the first, however), the other four negative comments are specific and do deal with substantive issues in storytelling: *authenticity* in narrative interpretation as implied in comments #3 and #7, narrative *logicality* as discussed in comment #5, and the *active mental participation of the audience* as brought into question in comment #6. The question remains: Are the positive comments of sufficient specificity and incisiveness to suggest that there exists a critical language in the art of performance storytelling?

Analysis of Positive, General Judgmental Comments

The combined number of comments from Figures 2 through 6 and 8, the positive but general comments, equals 120; from Figures

7, 9 and 10, the positive but specific comments, equals 110. Thus, the majority of positive comments (52 %) are quite general in nature. Do they, however, reveal any significant information that could serve as the basis for developing a critical lexicon for performance storytelling?

Focusing attention, for the moment then, only on these positive but general judgmental comments, it can be seen that the terminology, though limited in nature, reflects significant elements of the storytelling process. References to storytelling as a conversation (Figure 2, #12) and as an experience involving sharing (Figure 2, #27; Figure 3, #17) and active collaboration between teller and audience (Figure 3, #24) reveal the highly *collaborative* nature of storytelling. Moreover, the observations of two reviewers, one suggesting that the children in an audience lived the story (Figure 3, #8) the other that the teller inspired the audience to create the stories (Figure 2, #45), suggests that the role the audience plays in storytelling is as creative as that of the teller. This *co-creative*, collaborative relationship between the teller and the audience makes storytelling unique among the arts. In no other art form is the creation of the work of art so dependent on the immediate and creative collaboration of the artist and the patron. As such, storytellers must attend to their audiences in a more dynamic and demanding fashion than other types of artists. The ability to establish and maintain *rapport* (Figure 3, #11) with the audience is a critical skill for the teller.

The observation that T bares T's soul during a performance (Figure 2, #17) is an indication that storytelling is a very *personal experience*; that the personality, the mores, and the belief system of the teller are revealed (partially, at least) through the stories chosen and the method of delivery. Unlike actors and actresses who shield their own personas behind that of the characters they portray, the storyteller stands exposed to all members of an audience, his or her essence to be accepted or rejected by them. It serves as a reminder that tellers must remain *true to their personalities* when choosing

and delivering stories lest they risk destroying the trust necessary for engaging an audience in the co-creation of a story. Audiences, including young children, are adept at detecting *insincerity* and *artificiality*. These traits undermine the co-creative and collaborative relationship between the teller and the audience that must exist for storytelling to function.

A number of comments support the belief that storytelling is a valid *literary endeavor*. Storytelling, like quality print literature sparks the *imagination* (Figure 2, #29 & #45) in part through carefully crafted *word play* (Figure 2, #25 & 45), and *attention to detail* (Figure 6, #3). It is not childish or trivial. Rather it traffics in *significant issues* for young and old alike (Figure 3, #15). Good storytellers do have a *literary consciousness* (Figure 6, #2), do have something important to say (Figure 2, #20), and, through narrative rich in theme, do uplift members of an audience (Figure 3, #16) and enable them to learn more about themselves and the world around them (Figure 3, #8).

Several general comments reveal seven nominal terms and one evaluative one for elements involving the *delivery* (Figure 8, #4, #7, #8) of a story. *Pace* (Figure 8, #2), *rhythm* (Figure 8, #3), and *timing* (Figure 8, #3) have to do with the speed, speed variation, and use of pauses during a performance. *Transformation* (Figure 8, #4) involves changing from one character to another or affecting a change in a character using, among other things, varied *facial expression* (Figure 8, #6) or *vocal inflection* (Figure 6, #6). A teller capable of effectively changing character is said to be *flexible* (Figure 8, #5). In addition to these eight terms, the issue of authenticity, discussed during the analysis of the negative comments, is also exposed in one general comment on delivery (Figure 8, #9).

In sum, of a total of 120 positive and general judgmental comments only 23 (Figure 2, #12, #17, #20, #25, #27, #29, #45; Figure 3, #8, #11, #15, #16,#17, #24; Figure 6, #2 - #9; Figure 6, #2.

#3) yield terminology that could serve as the basis for developing a critical lexicon for storytelling. Moreover, when these terms are analyzed to determine whether they are explicitly stated in the comments or implied, whether they are purely nominal or evaluative in nature, and whether they are terms unique to the art of storytelling or borrowed from another art form (Table 2), what emerges is a picture that suggests that the authors of these comments have little understanding of the uniqueness of the art of storytelling.

Table 2

Relevant Storytelling Terminology Derived from the Positive General Judgmental Comments (Figures 2 - 6, 8) (Excluding Comments on Style)

Term (Location)	Text Reference		Nature of the Term		Derivation of the Term	
	Explicit	Implied	Nominal	Evaluative	Borrowed	Unique
1. Authenticity (F1, #3, #7)		X		X	X	
2. Logicality (F1, #5)	X			X	X	
3. Active Mental Participation by Audience (F1, #6)		X		X		X
4. Collaborative Nature of Storytelling (F3, #24)	X		X			X

Table 2 (Continued)

Term (Location)	Text Reference		Nature of the Term		Derivation of the Term	
	Explicit	Implied	Nominal	Evaluative	Borrowed	Unique
5. Co-creative Nature of Story-telling (F2, #45; F3, #8)		X	X			X
6. Rapport (F3, #11)	X		X		X	
7. Personal (F2, #17)		X	X			X
8. Insincerity (F2, #17)		X		X		X
9. Artificiality (F2, #17)		X		X		X
10. Literary Endeavor (many including citations for next five terms)		X		X	X	
11. Imaginative Nature of Storytelling (F2, #29 & #45)	X		X		X	
12. Word Play (F2, #25 & #45)	X		X		X	
13. Attention to Detail (F 7, #3)	X		X		X	

Table 2 (Continued)

Term (Location)	Text Reference		Nature of the Term		Derivation of the Term	
	Explicit	Implied	Nominal	Evaluative	Borrowed	Unique
14.Significant Issues (F3, #15)		X		X	X	
15. Literary Consciousness (F7, #2)	X			X	X	
16. Delivery (many including F1, #24; F6, #1)	X		X		X	
17. Pace (F6, #2)	X		X		X	
18. Rhythm (F6,#3)	X		X		X	
19. Timing (F6,#3)	X		X		X	
20. Transformation (F6,#30)	X		X		X	
21. Flexibility (F6, #47)		X		X		X
22. Facial Expression (F6, #6)	X		X		X	
23. Vocal Inflection (F6, #6)	X		X		X	
TOTALS	14	9	14	9	18	5

Eighteen of the terms were borrowed from other arts and none of the terms unique to storytelling were stated explicitly in the judgmental comments. In addition, while it is true that a few of the 14 nominal terms listed here were modified in the comments in some judgmental way, the modification was typically vague in nature

employing terms such as "entrancing," "flawless," "exquisite," "remarkable," and "fascinating." On the other hand, of the 9 purely and specifically evaluative terms emerging from these 23 comments, only 2 ("logicality" and "literary consciousness") were stated explicitly in the judgmental comments.

Thus, what can be said at best, is that the authors of the reviews containing the 120 positive, general judgmental comments have a vague understanding of the art of storytelling. Perhaps this lack of specificity is understandable to some extent. Palmer (1988, pp.13-14) indicates that theatrical reviews are considered to be a form of entertainment in and of themselves. As such, reviewers frequently employ metaphor, word play, wit - the type of language likely to retain reader interest but equally as unlikely to serve as a basic critical lexicon in the art of performance storytelling.

Analysis of the Positive, Specific Judgmental Comments

Of all the groups of comments, those in Figure 9 (Specific Positive Comments Involving Story Delivery), having to do with story delivery, come the closest to revealing terminology sufficiently specific to be incorporated into a critical lexicon for the art of performance storytelling. Nine terms are portmanteau words, applied to storytelling performances but borrowed from other arts, while two are unique to storytelling. The borrowed terms primarily identify elements of a performance open for critiquing. The terms *timing* (#1) and *pausing* (#3, #18), drawn from the fields of music and stand-up comedy, and the term *stress* (#18), drawn from music but here meaning emphasis placed on selected words, relate to the effectiveness of the rhythm of story delivery relative to the nature of the story itself. *Transition* (#9, #14, #21), another term borrowed from stand-up comedy and music, involves the smoothness with which a teller moves either from one character to the next in a

dramatic telling or from one story to another during an entire program. *Transformation* (14), a theatrical term, is synonymous with "transition" but only with regard to movement from character to character. *Choreography* (9), a term most frequently associated with dance, involves the fluidity and/or appropriateness of integration of gesture, movement, instrumentation, sound effects and the like into the story. The term *gesture* (#6, #11) is as appropriate for storytelling as it is for theatrics as is the case with the terms *expression* (#7), referring to the face, or *expressive voice* (#22). Note that all 9 of these terms are names for elements involved in the storytelling process none of which connote any sense of value judgment.

Beyond these borrowed terms, Figure 9 (Specific Positive Comments Involving Story Delivery) exposes additional language which appears to be unique to the art of storytelling. *Condescension* (#16, #20), or the habit of "talking down" to one's audience, is a critical flaw in a storyteller and is of no less importance than insincerity and artificiality in undermining the rapport between teller and audience. On the other hand, the ability of a teller to *disappear* (19) in telling a story is considered (albeit arguably) to be a hallmark of quality storytelling. Note here that these 2 terms are not purely descriptive but judgmental as well. Through their use a reviewer is implying that a "good" storyteller avoids condescension and disappears behind the story.

It is also important to note that the 11 terms that emerged from an analysis of the comments in Figure 9, emerged from only 13 of the total of 23 judgmental comments (#1, #3, #6, #7, #9, #11, #14, #16, #18, #19, #20, #21, #22). The other 10 comments though specific in nature revealed no concepts that could be integrated into a storytelling lexicon.

An analysis of the comments in Figure 10 (Specific Positive Comments Involving a Performer's Style) reveals a plethora of terms

that characterize many of the types of storytelling style extant today. Styles involving much movement or gesturing are characterized as kinetic (#1), animated (#2, #3, #26, #47), energetic (#2, #7) exuberant (#28, # 34), enriched (#8), or enthusiastic (#46). Those involving well-planned movement, gesturing, vocal variation, and characterization are described as dramatic (#5, #35, #39, #44, #47, #49, #52, #58) or theatrical (#55). By contrast, styles involving little movement, gesturing and the like are referred to as low-keyed (#16, #20, #24), or restrained (#36) . Artists who tell seemingly with ease are regarded as spontaneous or natural (#20), effortless (#21), or improvisational (#27). Tellers who are literary may be poetic (#9, #15, #56), eloquent (#29), or colorful (#:0, #60); those who aren't may be spare (#37), or simplistic (#51). Some tellers may be commanding (#24), compelling (#45), bold (#33), or direct (#40) while others may be unobtrusive (#14), unassertive (#59), conversational (#18), companionable (#23), and definitely not "in-your-face" (#19). Humorous tellers could be wry (#10), dead-pan (#11), impish (#40), playful (#17), hyperbolic (#54), or have a "flair for the ridiculous" (#12). Serious ones could be ironic (#25), or mystical (#15). Some tellers might be didactic while others might not (#13). Many are blessed with a rich or emotive voice (#4, #30, #31, #61). In all, these judgmental comments revealed a total of 38 terms which are exclusively descriptive in nature and about which no objective judgment can be made (a patron of the art either likes a particular style or doesn't like it).

The comments in Figure 7 (Specific Positive Comments Involving Story Content or Construction) present a mixture of 7 explicit and 4 implied concepts relative to inclusion in a lexicon of critical storytelling terminology. They serve to add depth to the notion, exposed through analysis of the positive, general comments presented before, that storytelling is a valid literary endeavor. Storytellers create narrative. Critical judgments about the quality of the stories themselves, their construction, and the way they are strung together into a program or performance piece can be made

based, in part, on standard literary criteria. Good stories involve plots that are *tightly written* (#4), that is, stories that avoid unexplained diversions from the main plot line. The author of a good story, whether delivered by voice or print, *attends to detail* (#11, #14; note also that the concept of attention to detail was also exposed in Figure 7, #3) to create images of settings and characters so realistic that they come to life for the audience and reflect reality (#2, #8, #11, #17, #18). This implies that good storytellers, like good authors, establish *verisimilitude* in their story settings and plots and *believability* in their story characters- two hallmarks of quality literature. In addition, a good story has *depth* and *thematically richness*; it includes layers of meaning (#16), emotional centers (#19), and commentary on the ever changing human condition (#21, #24). It *avoids sentimentality* (#19) and is *original* in construction (#20). Moreover, when multiple narratives are strung together in a storytelling program or performance piece (comparable to series books or a book of short stories in the world of print literature), critical judgment can be made about either the *cohesiveness* between each of the stories (#5) or the *variety* of types of stories and audiences that a teller is capable of handling (#9, #13, #15, #25). Finally, tellers capable of handling *complex* stories, like authors of intricate novels, tend to be highly valued for their talent (#3, #22).

In sum, of the 11 terms revealed in the positive, specific judgmental comments related to the content or construction of a story, 7 are used explicitly in the comments (tightly written, attends to detail, avoids sentimentality, originality, variety, complexity, cohesiveness) while 4 are implied (verisimilitude, believability, depth, thematic richness,). All of these terms except "attention to detail" are evaluative in nature. When reviewers use these terms they are implying that a told story <u>of literary quality</u> is tightly written, avoids sentimentality, employs believable characters, and is original. It is also important to note that the total number of terms revealed here were employed in only 19 of the 25 judgmental comments (#2, #3, #4, #5, #8, #9, #11, #13, #14, #15, #16, #17, #18,

#19, #20, #21, #22, #24, #25) listed in this figure. While the remaining 6 comments were specific in nature, they revealed no concepts that could be included in a storytelling lexicon.

If the data from Figures 7 and 9 are combined, and the key terms incorporated in this data are analyzed (see Table 3, Relevant Storytelling Terminology Derived from the Positive Specific Judgmental Comments [Excluding Comments on Style]) in the same way as were those from Figures 2 through 6 and 8, what emerges is a picture similar in nature to the one derived from an analysis of the positive general comments. (Note that specific positive comments on style, Figure 10, have been excluded from this analysis since key terms derived from these comments are purely descriptive in nature and, therefore, incapable of being analysed relative to whether a term is nominal or evalutive).

Table 3

Relevant Storytelling Terminology Derived from the Positive Specific Judgmental Comments (Excluding Comments on Style)

Term (Location)	Text Reference		Nature of the Term		Derivation of the Term	
	Explicit	Implied	Nominal	Evaluative	Borrowed	Unique
1. Timing (F8, #1)	X		X		X	
2. Pausing (F8, #3)	X		X		X	
3. Stress (F8, #18)	X		X		X	
4. Transition (F8, #9)	X		X		X	
5. Transformation	X		X		X	
6. Choreography (F8, #9)	X		X		X	

Table 3 (Continued)

Term (Location)	Text Reference		Nature of the Term		Derivation of the Term	
	Explicit	Implied	Nominal	Evaluative	Borrowed	Unique
7. Gesture (many including F8, #7 & #12)	X		X		X	
8. Expression (F8, #7)	X		X		X	
9. Expressive Voice (F8, #22)	X		X		X	
10. Condescension (F8, #16 & #20)	X			X		X
11. Disappearance (F8, #19)	X			X		X
12. Tightly Written (F10, #4)	X			X	X	
13. Attention to Detail (F7, #3; F10, #11 & #14)	X		X		X	
14. Verisimilitude (F10, #2 & #11)		X		X	X	
15. Believability (many including F10, #2, #8, #11, #17 & #18)		X		X	X	
16. Depth (many including F10, #16, & #21)		X		X	X	

Table 3 (Continued)

Term (Location)	Text Reference		Nature of the Term		Derivation of the Term	
	Explicit	Implied	Nominal	Evaluative	Borrowed	Unique
17. Thematic Richness (many including F10, #19, #21, #24)		X		X	X	
18. Sentimentality (F10, #19)	X			X	X	
19. Originality (F10, #20)	X			X	X	
20. Cohesiveness (F10, #5)	X			X	X	
21. Variety (many including F10, #9, #13, #15, #25)	X			X		X
22. Complexity (F10, #3 & #22)	X			X		X
TOTALS	18	4	10	12	18	4

Of the total of 48 comments from both figures, only 32 (19 from Figure 7, 13 from Figure 9) revealed terminology useful for establishing a storytelling lexicon. As was the case with the positive general comments, 18 of the derived terms were borrowed from

other arts (see Table 3). And while it is true that the 4 terms unique to storytelling and 8 of the 12 evaluative terms were found explicitly in the judgmental comments, these tallies seem quite small given the large number of comments sampled in this study and the expectation that writers of these comments, as professionals, ought to have a thorough understanding of the art they are reviewing and ought to have a command of language specifically appropriate for critiquing that art. Once again, the picture that emerges is that reviewers have little incisive understanding of the art of storytelling

Do Reviewers Understand the Art of Storytelling

There is additional information which indicates that the majority of the reviewers whose articles are included in this sample do not fully understand the art of storytelling. References to storytelling as theater or a special kind of theater appear in 13 of these reviews. In one review, stories are referred to as scripts; in two others, as monologues. Three reviewers refer to tellers as actors or actresses; one repeatedly uses the term "perform" rather than "tell" to refer to the process of storytelling. Moreover, as was revealed in the analysis of the judgmental comments, language which reveals the uniqueness of storytelling is rare.

In several reviews, the writers make comments which appear to be positive reflections on the art of storytelling but which, with careful reflection, reveal themselves to be condescending. One writer identifies as storytelling the performance of a teller but then states "...it (storytelling) is much more than that. It is drama, song, dance - a theater that T's voice, face, body...perform." Another writer states: "The simultaneous excitement and *limitation* (italics added) of T's kind of art is that it *reduces* (italics added) the theatrical experience to the personality of the performer." Still another writer suggests that "...with the skill of an *actor* (italics added), T can bring (a story) alive." The implication in all three comments is that

storytelling is somehow less artistic than other arts or that it cannot stand alone as an art form as legitimate as the other more popular arts.

By virtue of the fact that the vast majority of articles under review in this study are so general in nature, it is clear that few authors of articles on storytelling (be they feature or review in nature) have much of an understanding of the unique nature of the art of storytelling. In fact, of the 36 reviews analyzed in this study, there were only 3 which included more than one comment which suggested that the writer had developed some sensitivity to the unique nature of storytelling. Even in hese articles, however, such comments were frequently juxtaposed to other comments that revealed the writer's lack of understanding of the art. For example, in one article, the writer described storytelling as a process which liberates the imagination of the audience through co-creation of the story. But then he refers to storytelling as a way for people to reconnect with live theater. In still another review, the writer suggests that storytelling is a collaborative process and one that exposes the personality of the teller. But this is the same writer cited above who indicated that storytelling is a reduced and limited form of theater. The implication from these mixed messages is that these writers more than likely lack a full and conscious understanding of the storytelling process.

Summary

In summary, the analysis of the data from the sample of articles submitted for review indicates that only 60 of a total of 237 judgmental comments were valuable for revealing terminology useful for establishing a critical storytelling lexicon. From those comments 40 terms emerged 20 of which were purely nominal in nature and 32 of which were borrowed from other arts. Thus the

majority of the comments, though relevant to the art of storytelling, are too vague and imprecise to be of value in serving as a basis for developing a critical language for the art. Moreover, it is clear that reviewers of storytelling performances have little conscious

conception of the uniqueness of the art. Nonetheless, some judgmental comments do reveal concepts, more frequently implicitly than explicitly, which might serve as a starting point for developing a storytelling aesthetic.

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